



Delivered via e-mail

March 10, 2026

The Honorable Evan P. Stanley, Chair
House State Government and Elections Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Stanley, Vice Chair Corvese, and Honorable Members of the House State Government & Elections Committee:

On behalf of the National Marine Manufacturers Association, the Water Sports Industry Association, and the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas, we write to respectfully urge you to delay consideration of House Resolution No. 7992, which calls on the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to study and regulate the “impact of wake boats on Rhode Island public waterways.”

The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) is the largest trade association for the recreational boating industry, representing nearly 1,300 marine businesses, including recreational boat, marine engine, and accessory manufacturers. The Marine Retailers Association of the Americas (MRAA) is the leading trade association of North American small businesses that sell and service new and pre-owned recreational boats and operate marinas, boatyards, and accessory stores. MRAA represents more than 1000 individual member retail locations throughout the United States. The Water Sports Industry Association (WSIA) is the towed water sport’s industry’s leading advocate. WSIA develops best practices, maintains waterway access rights, educates participants, and promotes safety.

The marine industry welcomes opportunities to partner and collaborate with state agencies on studies and reviews of boating policies and regulations. Such reviews are opportunities to identify and assess ways in which boating laws can be improved, and ways we can make Rhode Island waterways safer for users.

But House Resolution No. 7992 is a misguided attempt to study a topic important to both the boating community and Rhode Island’s recreational maritime economy.

The Resolution’s preamble includes a number of statements, assumed as fact, which do not stand up to scientific scrutiny. Peer-reviewed studies have shown ballast-enhanced boats do not cause sediment resuspension in more than 10-15 feet of water. Other peer-reviewed science finds that at 200 feet offshore, the wave energy of a ballast-enhanced vessel is comparable to a typical vessel 100 feet offshore, or to a 20 mph wind blowing over a mile of water.

While as an industry we do not oppose the commencement of a study, this resolution sets, as its premise, a host of facts and statements of considerable dispute. A study based on the statements of fact as described in the resolution's text risks pre-judging or pre-ordaining an outcome to the detriment of Rhode Island's boating community.

Small businesses that rely on recreational boating are already aware of this effort: one local dealer has indicated he would be forced to move his business out of state should ill-considered restrictions on boating take effect.

Rhode Island already has tools to protect its waterways: boater education, speed limits, no-wake zones, distance setbacks, and authority to enforce laws against reckless or irresponsible boating. As an industry, we've prioritized boater education and engagement in preventing user conflicts. Our "Wake Responsibly" leverages dealers across the nation to educate boaters on respectful, safe boating practices.

We respectfully ask you to delay consideration of this measure and engage Rhode Island boaters and the many small businesses boating supports. Working together, we can develop a study framework that protects both Rhode Island's lakes and waterways – and the rights of responsible Rhode Island boaters.

Sincerely,

Sam Romano
National Marine Manufacturers Association

John Elizandro
Water Sports Industry Association

Chad Tokowicz
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas